

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for preparing enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid, ~~which is characterized in that~~ wherein a cell having an attenuated lipoyl protein ligase A activity is cultured in a culture medium, said cell secreting enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid in free form into said culture medium and said enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid being removed from said culture medium.

Claim 2 (currently amended): A cell secreting enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid into a culture medium and having an attenuated lipoyl protein ligase A activity, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein it has, instead of a wild-type *lplA* gene, an *lplA* allele which has, in the base pair range 367-465, a base substitution which results in the *LplA* protein activity being reduced by at least 50%, or having a deletion in the *lplA* gene.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The cell as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein any *LplA* protein activity is no longer detectable.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The cell as claimed in claim 2 or 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein it has an increased lipoic acid synthase activity or an increased lipoyl protein ligase B activity.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The cell as claimed in claim 2, 3 or 4, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein it is a microorganism such as, for example, a yeast or bacterial strain.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The cell as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the bacterial strain is of the family Enterobacteriaceae, preferably the species *Escherichia coli*.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a cell ~~as claimed in one or more of claims 2 to 6~~ secreting enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid into a culture medium and having an attenuated lipoyl protein ligase A activity, wherein it has, instead of a wild-type *lplA* gene, an *lplA* allele which has, in the base pair range 367-465, a base substitution which results in the *LplA* protein activity being reduced by at least 50%, or having a deletion in the *lplA* gene is used as the cell which has an attenuated lipoyl protein ligase A activity.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 7, characterized in that~~ wherein the enantiomerically pure R- α -lipoic acid is removed by centrifugation of the cell-containing culture medium and subsequent extraction or precipitation of the R- α -lipoic acid from the cell-free culture medium.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The method as claimed in ~~any of claims 1, 7 and 8, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the carbon source used in the culture medium is selected from the group of usable sugars, sugar alcohols or organic acids.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The method as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 and 7 to 9, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein fatty acids having a chain length of C2-C8, preferably having a chain length of C6-C8 (hexanoic and octanoic acid, respectively), are added to the culture medium.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The method as claimed in claim 9 ~~or 10, characterized in that~~ wherein the carbon source is used in a concentration of 0.1-30 g/l.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 and 7 to 11, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein the cells are incubated within the range of the optimum growth temperature for the particular cells over a period of 16-150 h.